



State of California
The Natural Resources Agency
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

PROJECT TITLE	Howell Mountain School Fuel Reduction Project		
PROJECT LOCATION	T9N, R5W, Sections 31 and 32, Mt. Diablo Base & Meridian (38° 35.031, -122° 26.984)	COUNTY	Napa
LEAD AGENCY	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)		
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) is planning to create a shaded fuel break around the Howell Mountain Elementary School located on White Cottage Road in Angwin, CA. The fuel break will enhance the school property as a Temporary Refuge Area for the community by acting to slow an advancing fire, provide a location where crews could more effectively and safely combat a fire, and improve the effectiveness of air tanker drops in the event of a wildfire. The majority of the project will occur northeast of the school on private property, with some flammable brush and small trees removed from the densely vegetated area in the southeast portion of the school property.

Vegetation in the project area consists of an overstory of trees including oaks (*Quercus* spp.), Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), and gray pine (*Pinus sabiniana*), with smaller trees such as California bay laurel (*Umbellularia californica*) and madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*) interspersed. Brush in the understory consists of manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* spp.), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), buck brush (*Ceanothus cuneatus*), and mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus* spp.). A variety of forbs make up a scattered layer of ground-level vegetation.

The project area is approximately three acres, consisting of a strip ranging from 60 to 150 feet wide for approximately 1,700 linear feet. Ladder fuel vegetation in the understory will be removed by hand and will be chipped or lopped and scattered. CAL FIRE Firefighter I hand crews will use chainsaws and loppers to cut brush and small trees (<6" diameter), which will be dragged to a chipper stationed on the road or other paved areas or lopped and scattered for decomposition.

EXEMPTION STATUS

- ☒ Categorical Exemption Type/Section: Class 4 §15304
Minor Alterations to Land
- ☐ Statutory Exemption (state code section):
- ☐ Ministerial (§21080(b)(1); 15268)
- ☐ Declared Emergency (§21080(b)(3); 15269(a))
- ☐ Emergency Project (§21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c))

REASONS PROJECT IS EXEMPT

This project fits the description for a Class 4, §15304 – Minor Alterations to Land Categorical Exemption to CEQA. Field review by CAL FIRE staff confirmed that no exceptions apply which would preclude the use of a Notice of Exemption for this project. The project consists of minor treatments to land and vegetation in the form of brush and small tree (<6" diameter) removal using hand crews and chippers. The activities will not result in the taking of endangered, rare, or threatened plant or animal species, or sedimentation to surface waters. CAL FIRE staff has concluded that no significant environmental impact would occur to aesthetics, agriculture and forestland/timberland, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, or to utilities and service systems.

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STATE CLEARINGHOUSE


Helge Eng, Deputy Director
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

3/21/16
Date